

THE PRESENT STATUS OF MISSIONS IN KWANG TUNG PROVINCE

*Paper read by Rev. G. W. Marshall before Canton Missionary Conference,
March 29, 1911.*

A leading periodical has attracted wide spread attention by the publication of an article entitled "The Passing of Humpty Dumpty." Taking his text from "Alice in Wonderland", the writer speaks of the marked change that has come about in business methods, the passing of wasteful modes of conducting business, of arbitrary dealings with employees, the substitution of a carefully studied, scientific, and intelligent plan covering every detail of business. This has been carried so far that it has given rise to a new profession, that of business experts whose services are in demand for the work of systematising the business of many firms. A short time ago a well known American attorney startled the public by declaring that the railroads of the country could save a million dollars a day by intelligent management and economy. The same principles are being applied to various departments of the government with surprising results. These are but examples of the awakening that is taking place in the business world. Economy and efficiency are the watchwords of the day, waste of material and energy the bugbear to be banished from every business concern.

It is a significant fact that many of the men who are leaders in the business world are also leaders in the great Laymens' Missionary Movement which bids fair to work in the King's business a revolution similar to that which is taking place in secular affairs. Naturally, these men are applying to the great problems of missions and evangelization the same scientific methods which are producing such results in their own business. They *expect* and rightly *demand* that their co-workers and representatives shall be ready to make use of the principles of economy and conservation of energy which experience has shown to be so effective. Definite response has been given to this movement on the part of missions thro the recent Edinboro Conference. A committee, called the Continuation Committee was appointed to carry out the resolutions of the conference and cooperate with the force on the field.

In view of this trend of thought and practice, and especially of the action of the Edinboro Conference, it seems expedient at this time to bring before a conference of representatives from most of the societies working in the Kwang Tung Province a brief resume of what has been accomplished and some forecast of what remains to be done. In order to do this I have sought the assistance of workers in each mission, and gratefully acknowledge the ready response which has been received in almost every case to the following questions:

1. How many stations has your mission and where located?
2. How many churches and where located?
3. What districts do you consider as the field of your mission?
4. For the evangelization of how many people do you consider your mission responsible? (An estimate of the number whether you overlap with other missions or not.)

The answers to these questions form the basis of what I bring to you this afternoon and have been collated under the following heads: Missionary Occupation, Responsibility and Efficiency.

1. *Missionary Occupation (covering *1 and *2).* A brief reference to the map will show what portions of the territory have been occupied. There are over 800 churches and chapels, in the midst of a population estimated at over 31 millions. When compared with other provinces of China, Kwang Tung stands first on the list as to the number of mission stations where foreigners reside, second as to number of missionaries, and fourth as to the smallest number of inhabitants to a missionary, that is about 60,000 to each missionary. The Presbyterians (including five Boards), occupy an almost unbroken line of territory from extreme northwest of the province down thro Canton, thence to extreme southwest of the island of Hainan. The English Presbyterians occupy the extreme east, and the Reformed Presbyterians the western part of the province. The Wesleyan and Berlin societies also have an unbroken territory from the north to the southern coast, overlapping each other, also, in places, Presbyterian and other missions. The Baptists also occupy this same line extending from North to South, uniting with the Northern Baptists in the East, and stretch across the province into Kwang Sai. The Basel Mission occupy the northeastern portion of the province among the Hakkas, in connection with Hong Kong as a base. The Rhenish Mission occupy a rectangle with corners at Hong Kong, Tsang Shing, Shun Tak, and Heung Shaan. The London Mission, United Brethren, and Swedish Missions occupy the central portions of the province. The

American Board stations form a triangle with base running from Hong Kong to Yeung Kong and apex in Canton. The Church Mission occupy a rectangle with corners at Hong Kong, Tsang Shing, Shiu Hing, and Hok Shaan, also the extreme western portion with center at Pak Hoi. The last named territory is held in common with the New Testament Mission, and Kiel Mission (German Presbyterian.)

From this summary it will be seen that in the center of the province, and on a line running from north to south and east to west, there is much overlapping as to nominal occupation, tho as a matter of fact there are many large markets and villages practically untouched. The corners show large stretches, in some cases even whole districts, which are entirely unoccupied.

2. Responsibility. The answers to the fourth question are estimates and naturally more or less indefinite. The assumption of responsibility, as inferred from these replies, must be described as decidedly vague. One answers "Responsible for as many as can reach;" four answer, "No idea how many." One makes appeal to home constituency on basis of population of entire province. Nine answer with estimates ranging from 24,880,000 down to 500,000, and aggregating 52,140,000. If all had estimated in the same way the grand total would amount to at least 75,000,000, or two and one half times the population of the province. This leads to three conclusions:

a) That the mission work of the province as a whole is planned and executed on a basis of two and one half times the actual population.

b) Taking into consideration this fact, together with the overlapping already indicated, it is obvious that there is much misdirected energy, misapplied funds, and waste of time; hence loss in efficiency, in other words, a state of affairs analogous to that which existed under the old business regime which is so rapidly passing away.

a) From these conclusions follows the third, namely that appeal to our constituency is being made on an improper basis, a greater-population than really exists, not intentionally, of course, but from lack of systematic and scientific application of the principles of Christian economy.

c) Efficiency. The ideal of efficiency would imply union (including comity and cooperation) and the highest degree of proficiency on the part of the individual missionary. Let us see how nearly this ideal has been approached, or rather, how far we fall short of it. As regards union, the Presbyterian bodies, the Reformed

Presbyterians excepted, unite in church organization, and in part in educational work. Two Baptist societies in the South have lately united in one mission. This mission, the Southern Baptist, has union publication work, with the Northern Baptists, and is beginning the discussion of union educational work for Hakkas at Wai Chow.

Failing to attain union, how far does comity exist among the missions?

Outside of the societies which have union, the three German Missions have comity as to division of territory and reception of members. Further than this, there is no clearly defined policy existing among the missions in regard to this most important question.

Again, failing as to comity, to what extent is cooperation practiced? It is with regret that we report that we have been unable to learn of any definite plan of cooperation existing among the missions of this province with the exception of what is represented by this conference, the Women's Conference, and the Educational Conference.

As a consequence of failure in these three lines, we have indefinite and continuous overlapping, leading to friction among the missions and confusion among the Chinese, giving rise to the temptation to baptize persons poorly prepared for fear that they may be taken up by some other mission. In this respect, we are behind other portions of the empire, which have organized Federation Councils in order to avoid these very difficulties. Examples of these are the Federation Councils of North China, West China, and Kiang Su, also the Shanghai Missionary Association. In other lands, admirable results are obtained from such councils in Korea, the Philippine Islands, and Southern India.

Last, but not least important as to efficiency, are the attainments of the individual missionary, especially in regard to the language. A criticism has been made of the missionary body in Canton, whether justly or unjustly, that the persons who can speak acceptably to a cultivated Chinese audience, might be counted on the fingers of one hand. It is true that the Chinese tend to make too much of the "Man Nga". There are many missionaries to whom they could listen with great profit. But the fact that such a statement could be made shows a lack of means of attaining proficiency in a most important equipment of missionary service. Language schools have been started in other parts of China, two in the China Inland Mission, one in Peking, and also in other lands. The school in Peking is very popular and is proving a decided success. Dr.

MacGillivray is advocating the establishment of a school in Shanghai for the training of men for literary work alone. A returned missionary read a paper before the Conference of Foreign Mission Boards of America, in which he stated that missionaries who had been trained in the language school in India for one year had a better grasp of the principles of the language than the majority of these who had been on the field for many years.

Steps should be taken at once to establish an up-to-date language school in Canton, under a competent leader, with efficient Chinese assistants giving in addition to language study, courses on history, religion, customs and etiquette of the people, and popular lectures on various themes, by both Chinese and foreigners. Missionaries trained under such auspices would accomplish in two years what they are now doing in five. Such a scheme would be supported by the Boards at home, for it was suggested by the Edinburgh Conference that such schools be established in the home land. All missionaries will agree that it is far better to have the schools on the field, where first hand information may be obtained in close touch with the life of the people.

As we honestly face the conditions that exist in our work in this province, are we not compelled to admit that we are losing much of efficiency, falling far short of what might be accomplished with the men and means available, and that, not because of insurmountable difficulties, but because of failure to adapt ourselves to changed conditions? It is perhaps not strange that in the oldest missions in China, work should have been begun and carried on independently by organizations which were then separated by so wide a gulf, and it may even be that in the beginning little was lost thro such lack of cooperation. But is that any excuse for continuing to flow along, each in his own narrow channel, when we might unite in one mighty resistless river of blessing? A century of mission work has brought us to a different age from the day of Morrison, conditions have changed rapidly in even a decade or half that time. As has been pointed out, the whole trend of thought and action is set towards economy of force and material. Shall we alone, the laborers in the Master's vineyard, be slow to avail ourselves of the advantages that would surely accrue from intelligent union, comity, and cooperation? Let us remember that he who exhorted us to be "fervent in spirit" united with that injunction "*not* slothful in business". If we continue to lag behind, what may be the consequence, what disaster may we not meet—loss of confidence on the part of businesslike laymen ready to back a business enterprise on the mission field, also inevitably, a breach

with the native church already eager for union movement. Already some liberal donors have announced their intention of giving no more to mission fields where overlapping exists, while among the Chinese a movement is on foot for a united native church.

In view of all that has been thus briefly and imperfectly set before us, what action shall we take? We find lack of comity and cooperation, and of highest proficiency, and that in the face of a province of 30,000,000 people with willing ears and open doors. Great changes are taking place, tremendous forces are at work for both progress and reaction, a great people preparing for the exercise of franchise and the establishment of a parliament, a great movement for an independent church. We see a church unsatisfied, petitioning for religious liberty, calling for something more beyond, the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ. Are we fully prepared to be the channels of such blessing? China is still in a plastic state. Which way will she settle? For Christian civilization or for an outward form of Western civilization but pagan still at heart? Now is our time to cooperate heartily with the great world movements for bringing in the kingdom of God. Are we prepared to meet our responsibility in the light of the revealed principles and purposes of God? Christianity is the only adequate world religion. In it a note of victory rings very clear above every other system. It is the only system prepared to meet every world crisis, but we need not be satisfied simply because God is blessing souls under the conditions that exist. A blessing comes in *spite* of them, for God makes all things work together for good *only* through prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Christ. Many are praying that God will bless and save souls in spite of the existing state of things. At the present moment, our responsibility is undeniably great, let us make it clear and definite.

When the armies took Peking in 1900, they did it as an allied force in perfect cooperation. It was recently stated by competent authority that the sum of money, \$250,000 per year, expended for the extermination of rats in the city of London, could by intelligent cooperation, accomplish in one season what has not been efficiently done under the old system with many years of wasteful expenditure. During the recent forest conflagration in the United States, the fire destroyed many living beings and drove thousands panic-stricken before it. Wild animals and human beings mingled together as they fled before their common foe. They walked, they ran, they swam the rivers together, none molesting or making them afraid. There was a common fellow feeling in the face of a common enemy. If terror could bring together men and beasts in a

common interest, what should the different branches of the Christians church do in the face of such formidable adversaries as the false systems of the non-Christian world? Yea, and we, the members of this Conference, as we face the thirty millions of unsaved men in this province?

The apostle Paul said, as he wrote to the members of the divided Philippian church. "If there is *any* exhortation in Christ, (*any* that is, if there be just a little bit), if *any* consolation of love, if *any* fellowship of the Spirit, if *any* tender mercies and compassion, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind, doing nothing through faction or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself, not looking each of you on his own things, but each of you also on the things of others." Fellow workers there is much more than "just a little" consolation of love among us, much more than "just a little" fellowship of the Spirit. Since there is such fellowship, how much more should we, in this twentieth century be of one accord, cooperating in the work of the Lord. There is much more of unity among us than we think. We have already joined with the Centenary Conference in voicing the sentiment "That we are already one body in Christ, teaching one way of eternal life, and calling men into one holy fellowship; and as one in regard to the great body of doctrine of the Christian faith; one in our teaching as to the love of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, in our testimony as to sin and salvation, and our homage to the divine and holy Redeemer of men; one in our call to the purity of the Christian life, and in our witness to the splendors of the Christian hope." Are we not also one on the apostolic basis of unity,—"One body, one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and thro all and in all."

Why should we not have a committee to act as a council of investigation and advice, on questions of comity, cooperation, and all matters relating to the higher efficiency of the missionary body, and to cooperate with other councils in China and the Continuation Committee of the Edinburgh Conference, to the end that there may be created in our midst "an atmosphere, an attitude, a tendency, a spirit, a Christian disposition, a Christian willingness and determination, to discover the will of God and to do it together."

G. W. MARSHALL.

As a result of the reading of this paper the Conference has since appointed a Federation Committee to act on all matters relating to the common interests and polity of the missionary body. Among other matters this committee has now under consideration the question of a language school for South China.